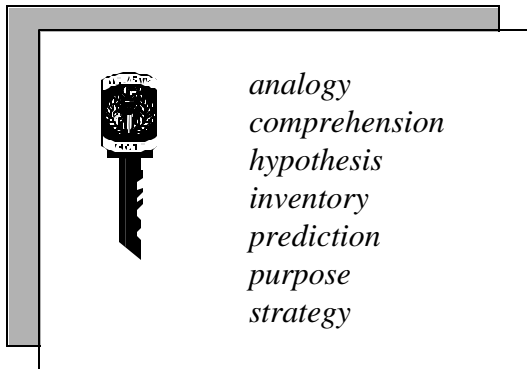


LESSON 2: READING FOR MEANING — COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES



INTRODUCTION

Every day you are bombarded with things to read — junk mail, billboards, newspapers, magazines, and books. Sometimes, it is hard to decide what to read and what to throw away. You read for many reasons: to gain information, for entertainment, to pass the time, or to study. If you want to improve your reading skills, read as much as you possibly can. You should read everything interesting — even backs of cereal boxes and comic books will increase your reading speed and **comprehension**. Soon, reading will come easily and it will be more enjoyable. But, do not give up looking for the types of material that you find interesting. All it takes is one good book and you will be enjoying the written word for all it is worth.

Reading is a communication skill that many people find difficult. However, like the other communication skills, practice will make reading easier and more enjoyable. Here are a few guidelines that you can follow which may make reading simple and more pleasurable. These guidelines are outlined below.

PREVIEWING

Preview (or scan) the material, especially a book, before you begin to read it. Previewing consists of looking over the table of contents, index, and title page. Search for familiar concepts and ideas that the material discusses. Do not spend too much time previewing, but do allow enough time to become familiar with the contents.

QUESTIONING

After you preview the material, make a list of questions related to the topic about which you are reading. Your preview should help you come up with relevant questions. Make your questions detailed. Remember that you can increase your knowledge by asking questions. Also, your reading will be more directed since you will be looking for specific answers.

The following are three different kinds of questions you can ask to gain better understanding of what you are reading.

1. *Empirical Questions.* These questions ask for information contained in the material that you are reading. They are questions to which the answers are factual. An example of an empirical question is “When did this event take place?”
2. *Value Questions.* These questions reflect values or point of view. Answers to value questions are based on opinion. An example of a value question is “Do I agree with the principles expressed in this book?”
3. *Analytical Questions.* These questions ask for a definition of what we mean by the words used in the question. Often they need to be asked before the other two types of questions are asked. For example, if you were asked, “How much of the material in this lesson did you

comprehend? You would first have to ask the question, “How do you measure comprehension?”

You will use all three types of these questions during your studies.

READING AND NOTE TAKING

After you have previewed your material and developed questions about the material, you are ready to read. Clear your mind of all personal challenges, open up the book, and begin the first page slowly. Keep a dictionary nearby so you can look up unfamiliar words as you go along. As you read, take notes in the column of the book (if it is your own book) or on a separate sheet of paper. You will be making an **inventory** of the information in the topic.

Schedule breaks during your reading. Do not try to read for a long period of time or you may become bored or sleepy. Also, do not read little sections at a time or you may easily become confused and distracted. Allow yourself at least half-hour intervals of reading time, then reward yourself with a five-minute break. During your break, walk around, stretch, or get a glass of water or a piece of fruit. However, during your break, you must have a lot of self-discipline so that you will return to your reading after the five-minute period is over.

As you progress in school, your instructors will require you to do research, give speeches, and prepare reports on material that may or may not be familiar to you. To complete these assignments, you may have to read as much material on your given subject as you can. Since you are reading for a **purpose** other than enjoyment, it may be helpful to first scan the material, then read it and take notes.

Taking notes on your reading gives you the opportunity to pick out the facts that are important to you. You will also remember what you are reading because you have to translate the material into your own words. Reading combined with note taking is an excellent way to remember important facts and to become familiar with new and challenging material.

OUTLINING

Outlining is an important part of reading. After you have read through the material once, create an outline. Your outline should capture the main points or ideas and answer the questions that you came up with earlier. If you have a large reading assignment, you may find it easier to outline sections of the material rather than trying to outline the entire assignment at once. You will find outlining a helpful tool for you when it is time to review the material you have read for a test.



HINTS FOR DIFFICULT READING

Sometimes, you must read about difficult subjects. During times of difficult reading, use the following suggestions to assist you in understanding the material better:

1. Look for key words in your material.
2. Hold a mini-review at the end of each paragraph. When reading a paragraph, you will see that it contains a main idea or topic. Notice that the other sentences support the main idea. If you determine what the main idea is first, you will better understand the concept of the paragraph.
3. Listen as you read the material aloud.
4. Ask an instructor questions about the material.
5. Find a tutor who can help you to understand the material better.
6. Explain what you have read to another person.
7. Take notes while you read the material; make an outline when you finish reading.
8. After reading your material, take a break from it. Work on or think about other projects.
9. Find another book, reference materials, and/or textbooks that cover the same topic. Sometimes other books can describe the same topic and concepts more clearly.
10. Imagine that what you are reading is real. Look at the pictures in the book and develop mental pictures in your mind about the material. Try to imagine that you are a part of them.
11. Keep a dictionary nearby so you can look up unfamiliar words as you read.

READING COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

The following reading comprehension strategies will assist you in gaining a better understanding of what you read.

DIRECTED READING-THINKING ACTIVITY (DR-TA)

The DR-TA reading comprehensive **strategy** is used to **predict** or define the author's purposes for writing the material you are reading. When you read, select relevant data, evaluate it, and use it to form predictions of the content of the material based on the information that you acquire. In this lesson, you can predict that the author wants to help you improve your reading comprehension.

GIST

Have you heard the expression, "Did you get the *gist* of the movie?" *Gist* means the main point of the movie. In the GIST reading comprehensive strategy, the letters actually stand for Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text. The strategy asks you to focus on short passages in your reading, three to five paragraphs in length, and create summaries for each passage in a structured step-by-step process. This will help you comprehend, or get the gist of the passage.

THINK-ALOUDS

Think-Alouds help you monitor your comprehension and apply self-correction strategies to get the most out of your reading. Five strategies that can be used during think-alouds are as follows:

1. Develop a **hypothesis** by making predictions.

Example: By reading the introduction in this lesson you can make a prediction that

this lesson is about learning how to become a better reader.

2. Develop images by describing the pictures forming in your mind from the information that you are reading.

Example: When you continue with the lesson, you might picture yourself reading a schoolbook.

3. Link new information with your prior knowledge by sharing analogies.

Example: While reading this lesson, you remember how you became a better football player when you approached each game with a plan. You now apply that **analogy** to becoming a better reader by following the plan in this lesson.

4. Monitor comprehension by verbalizing a confusing point.

Example: Sometimes it can help your comprehension by “talking through” a point in the reading that might be confusing.

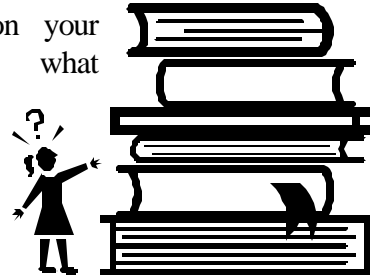
5. Regulate comprehension by demonstrating strategies.

Example: If your predictions about the meaning of this lesson turns out not to be what you originally thought, you can talk it through until you can comprehend the correct meaning of the lesson.

QUESTION-ANSWER RELATIONSHIPS (QARs)

As stated earlier in this lesson, one of the guidelines to help you become a better reader involves asking questions about the material that you have read. The type of question you ask must be based on the information you need to answer the question. In this reading comprehension strategy, you must draw on two different information sources to answer your questions: the information in the material that you read and the information inside your head. For

example, you can find the answer to the question, “What are some hints to help you understand difficult reading?” in the lesson material. However, if your question was, “Does one hint work better for you than another?” you would have to rely on your knowledge of what works best for you.



CONCLUSION

Reading is an essential skill because you use it every day of your life. Do not allow weak reading skills to interfere with the life goals that you have set for yourself. You will need to be a good reader to succeed in school, obtain a job, and advance in the work force. As with your other communication skills, you must practice reading daily in order to improve your reading skills.